

All massage and myotherapy clinicians can contribute to research

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One of the most frustrating things about research is the amount of time it takes; and there are many aspects about research that take time. First, there is the design and planning of the research study while gathering resources and expertise needed to complete the project. This can take anywhere from two months to two years or more depending on the complexity and breadth of the project. Next, there is the securing of funding to get the project done. Funding acquisition timelines can vary widely depending on the funding source but even in a fast cycle, months are needed to finalise revisions and establish the contract and reporting expectations and complete the transfer of funds. In many instances, securing funding for a project can take several months to several years, again depending on the complexity, breadth, and perceived importance for the work and the funding agency.

Finally, the actual research study can start and that is when other time components come into play such as personnel training, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and writing up and disseminating the results in the peer reviewed literature. Even after research is complete and disseminated, additional lag time exists for research to translate into products, policy and practice. In general, this time lag from research to practice is 17 to 20 years!^{1,2} So, are you saying, 'holy cow!' to yourself right now? Are you totally turned off from conducting or even getting involved in research? Don't be discouraged because rest assured, there are many ways in which massage and myotherapy clinicians can contribute in a meaningful way to the research foundation of our field and I want to encourage you to do it!

This is the author's version of the work published in final form as:

Munk, N. (2019). All massage and myotherapy clinicians can contribute to research. *Massage & Myotherapy Journal (Australia)*. 37.

Few massage or myotherapy clinicians are interested in or equipped for a formal, academic, research career however, all clinicians' clinical expertise and experiences have the potential to inform research, education, and practice. When you look at the research evidence hierarchy pyramid, it is easy to just focus on its bright and shiny top with the Randomised Controlled Trials and Systematic Reviews/Meta-Analyses 'gold standards.' These are the types of research that while incredibly important, take an incredibly long time; which is why usually only full-time researchers and/or academics lead these endeavours. This is not to minimise the HUGE need for more massage and myotherapy clinicians trained in research and in research focused careers – but that is a topic for another article! I want you to take a closer look at the pyramid: Above the Editorials, Expert Opinion base and just below Case-Control Studies. Here lies the second tier of the pyramid's foundation: Case Studies, Case Reports which by their very nature derive from practice and are clinician generated. This is the place where clinicians can report their practice findings in the peer-reviewed literature and this is how other health related fields, clinicians, and patients can see what is done and happening in massage and myotherapy practice.

Case reports are essentially documented clinical experiences systematically described by the clinical care provider about an interesting case they experienced in their practice. Medicine has used case reports as a way to disseminate interesting and novel cases, anomalies, discoveries, or adverse events to other clinicians from Egyptian antiquity to today.³ Interesting case report tidbit: the first heart transplant was reported via case report in 1967.⁴ Now considered an integral part of evidence based medicine and a key education component for research literacy in other health-related fields with established reporting guidelines, the international massage and myotherapy field is poised for growth in this area. There are many resources to which massage and myotherapy clinicians can turn to for guidance in writing a case report including the Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (TMB) Adapted CARE Guidelines⁵ (which anyone can access in full in the open access International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork – IJTMB), the five-part case report webinar series covering the different aspects of writing a case report

generally and massage related case report specifically,⁶ and the massage related case reports audit examining published reporting deficiencies in the literature.⁷

It is easy to let the seemingly slow pace of research in our field be discouraging but massage and myotherapy clinicians have tons of clinically generated data at their fingertips that can be turned into contributing literature relatively quickly. If you have ever found yourself starting the relaying of a clinical case 'story' with something like, 'the most interesting thing happened in clinic today,' or 'I had a client who was able to [fill-in-the-blank] for the first time in ages,' you likely have the beginnings of a really great case report!

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Figure.

